

**Region 6 Citizens Advisory Council Minutes**  
**June 15, 2010**  
**Cottonwood Inn, Glasgow**

CAC members present: Jason Deming, Tom Burch, Connie Iversen, Rich Stuker, Dustin Hill, Bernie Hart, Darlyne Dascher, Stan Lund

CAC members absent: Les Schaaf (submitted written comments), Fran Buell (submitted written comments), Robert Smith, Steve Sukut, Scott Billingsley, Don Groven, Steve Harada

FWP staff present: Pat Gunderson, Mike Herman, Steve Dalbey, Kelvin Johnson, Ron Selden

Pat Gunderson welcomed the group and reviewed the agenda, which includes potentially changing the CAC's configuration.

Robert Smith and Rich Stuker are at the end of their final terms; Bernie Hart, Connie Iversen, and Steve Sukut have completed their first of two potential terms. Pat thanked them all for their service. Those who are eligible were encouraged to apply for a second term.

**CAC ROUNDTABLE**

**Darlyne Dascher, Fort Peck** – Regarding potential reorganization of the CAC, there are pros and cons of keeping the group at 15 members. It's difficult because the Region is so large, and many members have to travel far to make meetings. Meeting on the weekends is tough for FWP staff, and meeting on the weekdays is hard for members who work.

She added that fishing seems to be good on Fort Peck Reservoir this year. She's not seeing the usual number of mule deer on her place, but she's not sure why. There were lots of hunters in her area last season, and she's noticed an increase in people trespassing over the past couple of years.

**Rich Stuker, Chinook** – Rich is seeing lots of deer and antelope around his place. There was some winter-kill, but it didn't appear to be extensive. Landowners in his area had trouble with errant snowmobilers cutting fences and leaving gates open last winter.

One of his biggest concerns is that these activities all cause further damage to the relationship between landowners and sportsmen. Weeds – whether they're brought in by hunters or by other recreationists -- are also a big worry for producers, especially in wet years like this.

Rich said there are now mountain lions up Lodge Creek and some other drainages in his area.

**Connie Iversen, Culbertson** – She agreed that relationships between landowners and sportsmen are among the most important issues in the Region. Hunter numbers are down in her area. She's not sure that's because of the sagging economy or other factors. She's seeing lots of antelope fawns, but folks are reporting reduced numbers of whitetails in the Missouri River bottomlands and in other areas around Culbertson.

Connie has heard a lot of concern about the American Prairie Foundation (APF) and its programs in Eastern Montana. The reintroduction of bison is a big issue, mainly because of landowner fears about brucellosis. She asked whether FWP is trying to move bison to "wild" status instead of being classified as livestock as they are now. She also wondered whether results from FWP's online survey about bison have been compiled.

Pat Gunderson noted that FWP is hearing a lot about bison, as well. He explained FWP's past interactions with APF, as well as FWP biologist Arnie Dood's assignment to study the bison issue extensively this year.

Rich said large numbers of free-roaming bison would be very detrimental to ranchers. He said APF has bought land within the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation and is looking at the Robinson Ranch near Bullwhacker Trail.

Darlyne said "free-roaming" is the term that bothers folks the most. People certainly have the right to raise bison and keep them on their own land, however.

Rich said he predicts there will be another large national monument created in this area at the end of President Obama's second term. Darlyne added that there are already a lot of concerns about the future of livestock grazing on the Charles M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge (CMR), as well as wolves showing up there.

**Jason Deming, Sidney** – He sat in on a hunter education class recently and was surprised there was very little focus on landowner etiquette. There were a lot of hunters around the Sidney area last year, and lots of people were shooting off roads and trespassing.

He's seeing large numbers of mule deer and lots of whitetail still in the Yellowstone River bottom. Mountain lion numbers also seem to be increasing, especially in the river bottom areas of Region 6 and 7.

Jason added that there's a shortage of recreational sites around Sidney, and he'd like to see that changed. In the past, Kuester Lake was very popular for fishing and other recreating, but he's not clear what happened to the site. Region 6 Fisheries Program Manager Steve Dalbey said he'd check into it.

Jason asked whether a small pond outside Sidney that is owned by the sugar company could be established as a youth fishing site. It's determined that the pond is actually in Region 7.

**Tom Burch, Fort Peck** – He's concerned that our hunter education program is targeting the wrong age of youngsters. It might make more sense to focus on older teens, especially those who have just received their driver's license, because they're often the ones who are violating fish and wildlife laws.

Tom asked whether a state game warden can go on private property without permission. Region 6 Enforcement Captain Mike Herman said that if the warden sees a violation occurring, then yes. That's also true if the land is not specifically posted, he said. Tom also asked whether wardens can enter lands enrolled in the Block Management program. Mike said each landowner contract includes a clause allowing FWP administrative use.

**Dustin Hill, Scobey** – Hunter education started out solely as a safety program, but it has evolved over the years to include many other aspects, including landowner relations and the responsibilities of hunters. Dustin is a longtime instructor, and his students spend a lot of time focusing on ethics and landowner issues.

Pat agreed that teens getting their first driver's license the same time as being able to hunt alone for the first time creates a potentially bad situation. Jason said large numbers of teenagers in the Sidney area combine drinking with hunting, which can be a lethal combination. Tom said maybe there should be more prerequisites to purchasing hunting licenses.

Dustin said Whitetail Reservoir is quite popular in the Scobey area, and anglers are waiting until the walleye there are large enough to catch. He's seeing more whitetails around his area, but not a lot of mule deer.

**Bernie Hart, Hinsdale** – The deer carryover in his area seems to be good. Nearly 200 concerned community members attended a recent meeting in Saco to discuss the bison issue and the potential for another national monument being designated in the area. He reiterated that most folks want bison to continue to be classified as livestock.

Bernie said he'd like to see FWP manage mountain lions more intensively in Eastern Montana. He thinks there are a lot more lions around than most people realize.

**Stan Lund, Plentywood** – There's been lots of moisture in Sheridan County, and that should be good for game birds. About 65 percent of the county is farmland, and more folks are cleaning up fences, old buildings and other bird-sheltering areas to be able to use larger and larger equipment. Lentils are commonly grown in his area, and they're a good food for birds.

He said relations with FWP are poor there because of our restrictive policies on feeding pheasants. He added that the agency needs to shorten its response time when conditions deteriorate to the point that feeding is needed. He continues to receive questions and

comments about FWP's bird-release program. He'd like the program to be evaluated more extensively once this year's harvest numbers are in.

**Les Schaaf, Saco** – In written comments, Les said he's being asked what the timeline is for making improvements at Nelson Reservoir and why FWP is buying up so much property throughout the state.

Les also requested that FWP put out more positive stories about hunters and other outdoor enthusiasts to the general public, especially to folks living in urban areas where understanding of hunting and fishing issues is less likely to occur.

**Fran Buell, Gildford** – In written comments, Fran said the Montana Trappers Association (MTA) and trappers in Region 6 are pleased that the FWP Commission has approved a tentative trapping season for swift fox. She asked that members support this step in the management of this furbearer by sending their comments to the Commission. She added that the harvested animals will provide vital information to FWP when skulls and other details are received from the trapper.

All MTA District Spring meetings discussed the issue concerning the trapping of wolves in Montana. Trappers support this method of harvesting the excess wolves ONLY if there is a seminar or method of teaching those individuals applying for a permit on the proper trapping of the wolf. It is the fear of the MTA that if the season is open without proper training, anyone will go out and set any type or size of trap anywhere trying to harvest the wolf. This could be a disaster for trapping as a whole.

Today is the final day that the anti-trapping group can collect signatures to get proposed Initiative 160 on the ballot. They have hired people to gather signatures, and last week they only had a little over 7,000 signatures to collect. The group has rented an RV and members are traveling all over the state spreading misinformation on trapping to gain these signatures.

The first two legislative districts of the 34 needed to qualify were in the Helena area. The MTA BIC, Montanan's for Effective Wildlife Management approached the FWP Commission for public support. From the report she received the Commission does not support the I-160 but they want to wait to see if it makes the ballot before voicing a formal position. However, if I-160 gets on the ballot, we will have twice the battle and three times the expense to see that the voters in Montana do not approve it. The fear is that these people will not stop at trapping, and it will be the bow hunters and fishermen next.

Our District 6 director attended a meeting concerning the purchase or designation of land in Phillips and Valley Counties as a potential national monument. Fran said this is another attempt by "animal activists" to stop the harvest and management of wildlife. As such, she said this activity needs to be monitored closely.

Lastly, MTA recently held its Youth Trapper Camp, and 155 people attended. She said they were again able to do damage-control trapping of beaver and nine were caught.

### **FWP PROGRAM UPDATES**

Region 6 program managers submitted written updates to members prior to the meeting. Steve Dalbey added that National Geographic Television has been in the Region filming a segment on paddlefish that will air in September. He's also getting more FTE hours for completing pond work.

Regarding the Milk River, Steve said the waterway's only legally authorized use is irrigation. Nonetheless, he wants fisheries crews to do more research there to better determine baseline information.

Steve explained current pallid sturgeon recovery efforts, and Ron Selden gave details of the Kids to Fish rod loaner program and related topics. Mike Herman provided details about pending Region 6 cases, and Kelvin Johnson outlined the Milk River Initiative and several pending conservation easement proposals.

Tom Burch had several questions about access in regards to Block Management Areas and conservation easements. Pat explained that every easement property in Region 6 is also in the Block Management program, but that's not a requirement.

Tom also has questions about current functions and capacities at the Fort Peck Hatchery.

Kelvin said work is progressing on Michael Nye's public lands signing projects at Three Buttes and in the Milk River Valley. FWP biologist Scott Hemmer of Broadus recently accepted the biologist position in Havre, and the empty biologist position in Malta will soon be advertised.

Among other topics, Pat addressed Parks Division issues and gave brief updates on Region 6 staffing, tribal relations, swift fox translocations, energy development issues, CMR and Bureau of Land Management planning processes, chronic wasting disease, a proposed translocation of sage grouse to Alberta and a meeting that took place in Havre over the winter about deer populations.

### **REORGANIZATION DISCUSSION**

Rich suggested that CAC meeting dates be set far in advance and be kept the same each year. That way members can get the dates on their calendars far in advance. Connie suggested using the Doodle scheduling program on the Internet to determine which dates work best. She isn't in favor of reducing the number of meetings because she feels the CAC is a very good public relations tool for the agency.

Darlyne agreed that dates should be set far ahead, and that the CAC is very valuable in helping the public and agency employees keep up on issues from each other's perspectives. Tom wondered about the lack of public participation at CAC meetings, and he suggested that a news release be prepared after each meeting to share what happened.

Jason suggested that meetings be more centrally located. That should help boost attendance. He said it's probably best to keep most of them in the Glasgow area. Bernie said carpooling definitely helps reduce individual travel.

All members in attendance said they'd like to keep the group the same size and most were not in favor of breaking the full CAC into subgroups. The group agreed to reduce the number of meetings from four to three a year and to tentatively have them on the second Tuesdays in January, June and September.

Ron will organize a committee to fill the five open seats. The next CAC meeting is set for Sept. 14 in Glasgow or at the Fort Peck Hatchery.

#####